

From the Editors of the European Journal of Humour Research

Dorota Brzozowska

Opole University
dbrzozowska@uni.opole.pl

Władysław Chłopicki

Jagiellonian University
w.chlopicki@uj.edu.pl

Villy Tsakona

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
villytsa@otenet.gr

As in early 2017 our journal was entering its fifth year, we planned a special issue dedicated to the life and achievements of the renowned humour researcher, Professor Emeritus of Reading University in the United Kingdom, Christie Davies. The initiative had come from Professor Giseline Kuipers of Amsterdam University, a former editor of our partner *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, and Professor Delia Chiaro, the current President of the International Society of Humor Studies, and we enthusiastically accepted their plan and asked them to be Guest Editors of the issue. For Christie Davies was someone quite special and unique both for all of us personally and for the European Journal of Humour Research and humour scholarship at large. He was a contributor to the journal as well as a reviewer of many in-coming contributions – the last review we received from him was in June 2017, in which he recommended to the author a comparative approach, and commented succinctly: “Revise a lot!”

Indeed he was a great scholar, mentor, and friend, keen to encourage younger scholars to develop their thinking with precision, be critical and bravely take into account all the relevant facts, especially social facts, even though they did not match their *a priori* assumptions, even though they were socially dodgy (a favourite word of Christie’s – see his reprinted article in the present issue for all kind of “social dodginess” he pursued in his research). In fact, this was his central message in his memorable speech he delivered upon receiving the Honorary Doctorate of the University of Galați in Romania on 8 November 2012. Memorably, while there he also encouraged Professor Diana Popa, to continue her efforts to start the *European Journal of Humour Research* – and indeed it was launched three months later and has continued ever since.



Viața liberă online (<https://www.viata-libera.ro/educatie/36048-viata-libera-galati-complexul-muzeal-stiintele-naturii-senat-universitate-doctor-honoris-causa-profesor-britanic-christie-davies>). See Professor Diana Popa, the founder of our journal (taking the picture)

At the same time he was a lovable eccentric, given to practical jokes and impersonations intended to reveal his interlocutors' true, though concealed, opinions – for example, he would never deny he was Jewish, which people sometimes took him to be due to his bearded appearance and excellent awareness of everything Jewish, just in order to use the inevitable ethnic mix-up for its comic potential. He would also go to great lengths to adopt views he never held or refer to facts that were never to be, such as in the famous spoof article advocating the resettlement of the Hong Kong population into Northern Ireland, published in 1983 (see <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-33361999>), in order to stir uneasiness, provoke laughter or sometimes reveal a poor sense of humour or ethnic prejudices of important people. Nobody, we dare say, had such vast knowledge of, and fascination over, ethnic humour. He could easily adjust his research to the ethnic identities of his audience: his talks in innumerable countries around the globe often examined ethnic humour emerging and circulated in that part of the world. He also practiced what he preached – that ethnic humour is the most efficient and appealing way of evoking laughter, and believed – in agreement with his essentially conservative agenda – that attempts of curbing it by political correctness are futile and groundless as humour in its essence is not aggressive, but playful. Furthermore, with his writings he passionately highlighted and defended the positive aspects of humour, which was important for gradually promoting the international acceptance of humour as an object of serious academic study. Not everyone knows that he was the first humour scholar who managed to institute and run an M.A. programme in Humour Studies (at Reading University in the 1990s).

Sadly, Christie's health deteriorated much more rapidly than anyone could predict, and on Saturday morning of 26 August 2017 the bad news came from the Reading hospital that he had departed for the better world. The present issue then, very much contrary to our intentions, turned into an in memoriam issue. The Guest Editors worked rapidly, eager to deliver the promise made to Christie that this issue would be published soon in his honour, and managed to collect a fine selection of articles from top humour scholars literally from across the globe, from the United States to Australia, and of course from Europe.

Christie Davies, an extraordinary thinker of unmatched versatility and erudition and an interested and tolerant listener, will be greatly missed at our humour conferences, but we do hope that his work, convictions and influence will live on, not least due to the present special issue suitably titled – “Playing with Aggression”.

With our gratitude to the Guest Editors, we invite you to read the issue through and be inspired...